

**International Journal**  
*of*  
**EMOTIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**  
**AND SPORT ETHICS**  
**[IJEPSE]**



**VOL. 12, JUNE 2010**  
**ISSN: 1119-7048**

**International Journal of Emotional  
Psychology and Sport Ethics  
(IJEPS)**

**Volume 12, 2010**

**ISSN: 1119-7048**

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## Editorial Comments

The Society for Psychology in Sport and Human Behaviour is pleased to announce the stability and continuous impact of the International Journal of Emotional Psychology for meeting the yearnings and dreams of our ever increasing and widely spread and articulate readership. This edition of the journal has added the benefits of continuous numbering starting from the last edition. The Society is therefore pleased to introduce the **12<sup>th</sup> Volume, 2010** of the International Journal of Emotional Psychology and Sport Ethics (IJEPSSE). The IJEPSSE is peer-reviewed and accessible online through the **ajol web site at** (<http://www.ajol/journal>). The Journal e-mail: [mtnlpsychlgy@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mtnlpsychlgy@yahoo.co.uk)

The International Journal of Emotional Psychology and Sport Ethics (IJEPSSE) is a professional journal of the Association of Psychology in Sport and Human Behaviour. The IJEPSSE had metamorphosed from the old name of the Nigerian Journal of Emotional Psychology and Sport Ethics to reflect its versatility with foreign contributors. It publishes a wide variety of original articles and reports relevant to feelings and/or emotions, human behaviour in diverse forms as in sexual harassment, battery/battering, bullying etc. Theoretical propositions, research outcomes summarizing studies in behaviour disorders, marriage and family issues, disabling behaviour in learning/adjustment, (otherwise, education generally), workplace behaviours as well as sport-related regulations and ethics from different parts of the World. Other related areas of health psychology, mental health studies, Anthropological investigations as well as ecumenical behaviours also form part of its focus.

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## **Male and Female in Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*: A Sociolinguistic Overview**

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### **Abstract**

This paper is a sociolinguistic examination of the presentation of male and female speech in Ola Rotimi's *Our husband has gone mad again*. The preference for this text amidst several others stems out of its continuous use till-date, as a compulsory literature text in all Nigerian schools for more than two decades. It is assumed that for Africa and indeed the world to be an egalitarian society; teachers must find innovative ways of using language to deconstruct sexist literature and helping readers, particularly students, to imagine a world in which there can be genuine equality. The findings from this study revealed that this literary text adopted gender sensitive or inclusive language because it overtly recognizes males and females as possessing equal potentials. The paper recommends that writers should adopt gender-sensitive language such as in this text for their literary writings, to prevent their giving a one-sided view of societies. It further suggested that teachers of literature and curriculum planners should find innovative ways of breaking stereotypes where they exist, such as the objective representation of men and women as butting-in and nagging, since both men and women take part in such speech acts.

**Key Words:** Sociolinguistics, male and female speech, sexist language, literature

### **Introduction**

Sensitizing writers and teachers of literature, as well as all those engaged in the drawing up of curriculum and education materials to the linguistic processes of identifying in context uses of language that are dishonest.



misleading or manipulative is important. Understanding the role of language in perpetuating male dominance in literary texts is crucial; if we understand this then we can acknowledge misrepresentation and misconceptions and set the pace for an egalitarian African society.

Weber (1996) attests to the fundamental importance of language in the structure of the literary text. The starting point for an interpretation process has to be the language of the text. Language use is not merely for an effect or reflex of social process. It constitutes social meanings and thus social practices. Language as a literary tool 'does not passively reflect, but actively reproduces inequalities' (Cameron, 1990:79). According to Penelope (1990), words matter because words significantly determine what we know and what we do. Words change us or keep us the same. When women are deprived of a forum for words they are deprived of the power necessary to ensure their well-being. Perhaps literary luminaries know this, which may be responsible for why some of them repeatedly paint the picture of the 'good woman' as the silent woman and the picture of the 'bad woman' as the talkative Tebbutt (1977) describing the representation of women's talk in literature says:

Women's talk has traditionally been disparaged as an inferior form of conversation. European culture (like African culture) is imbued with hostile representations of women who appear as 'nagging' scolding and generally talking too much (p. 19)

This kind of derogation is often so subtle, that it escapes the attention of the unsuspecting. This trend is furthered by presentations in literary texts perhaps unconsciously. Some African literary texts carry hidden assumptions about the tongue or language attitude of the female, which downgrades, negates and underestimates her. This repeated pattern may lead readers to believe that women are naturally inferior, unable to keep secrets and void of intelligent and concise speeches. The table below reveals an analysis of some discourse acts undertaken by characters in the book "*Our husband has gone mad again*" which show that both men and women engage in such acts (1977).

**Table 1: Male and Female Textual representation**

Are men and women less represented?	
No of F	5
No of M	10
Who initiates conversation?	
No of F	4
No of M	4
Not Taking Turn <sup>9</sup> in dialogues or Butting-in	
No of F	1
No of M	3
Those shown as talking too Much or nagging	
No of F	2
No of M	1

**F=Females      M=males**

### **Text as Discourse**

Discourse refers to language in use. Jarworski and Coupland (1999) agree that Discourse is language constructed by a set of social practices or language reflecting social order. Schrifin (1995) discussed six major approaches to discourse. The approaches are: Speech Act Theory, Interactional Socio-linguistics, The Ethnography of communication, Pragmatics, Conversational Analysis and Variation Analysis.

This paper adopts H.P Grice's theory on pragmatics which Fasold (1990:128) describes as 'the nub of pragmatic research'. The theory suggests a particular view of human communication that focuses on intentions, especially speaker's intentions. Grice's pragmatics provides a way to analyse the inference of speaker meaning; how hearers infer intentions underlying a speaker's utterance. It consists of four maxims know as the cooperative principle (CP). Attached to this principle are conventional and conversational implicatures. The CP and implicatures allow us to account for how people or characters in a play convey messages not provided through the stable semantic meaning of their words. The additional meanings that seem to appear in utterances are implicatures. These implicatures are due to rules and principles of conversation underlying communication. Also the CP allows speakers of what they say. The four maxims in the cooperative to lead their hearers to interpretations of their communicative intent that go beyond logical meanings principle are started below.



## (1) The Maxim of Quantity

- (a) Gives the appropriate amount of information as required for the current purposes of exchange.
- (b) Do not make your contribution more or less informative than required.

## (2) The Maxim of Quality

- (a) Be truthful.
- (b) Do not say what you believe to be false.
- (c) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

## (3) The Maxim of Relevance

Be relevant (to the present discourse)

## (4) The Maxim of Manner

- (a) Avoid ambiguity and obscurity of expression.
- (b) Be brief and orderly (well organised, well behaved).

It should be noted that it is the adherence to or flouting of these maxims that provide the basis for the inference of implicatures. Implicatures can be created in one of three ways; a maxim can be followed in a straightforward way, in which case it may have logical meaning known as conventional implicature as in the example below:

- |           |                                 |
|-----------|---------------------------------|
| Speaker A | How are you?                    |
| Speaker B | I am fine?                      |
| Speaker A | Will you be in school tomorrow? |
| Speaker B | Yes                             |

A maxim can be violated because of a clash with another maxim or a maxim can be flouted in which case the conversational implicatures are inferred. For clarity we shall consider two examples of this kind of implicature below;

**Example 1:**

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| Mary:  | What film will you be watching tomorrow? |
| Chike: | I have my studies to attend to.          |
| Mary:  | Oh which school do you attend?           |
| Chike: | I'm on holidays.                         |

Chike's replies do not directly answer Mary's questions; although the maxim of relevance is implied, the maxim of quantity has been flouted.

Chike has not made his contributions as informative as required. By not giving out personal details about himself, he keeps Mary at an arms length and communicates indirectly that he does not want intimacy with her.

**Example 2:** Wale (his hands screws the cigarette, he let it fall on the carpet)

Zaynab (Outraged) What do you think you are doing?

(She stares at him) Pick it up! Pick it up I tell you!

(His hands closes upon hers as she reaches for it).

Zaynab what are you doing? Let go (struggling to free her hand).

Wale (Intensely) sit down.

Zaynab How dare you?

Wale Sit down.

Zaynab What are you doing?

Wale Sit down I say.

This dialogue does not fit a conventional one in several respects. Wale does not respond to Zaynab's command and questions. Wale has broken the maxims of quality and relevance. By ignoring Zaynab's question he demonstrates the unequal distribution of power between them as he speaks with the air of superiority. He also indirectly communicates the value placed on Zaynab's speech as ranting or nagging.

**Example 3:** Bennet: Could you show me the way to the white market please?

Rose: Oh not far from here at all, just behind that green building, things are quite cheap there and in fact the members of staff are quite decent.

Rose has said more than the required information and by implication is talkative.

### **Analysing the Text– *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* with the Cooperative Principle**

This section undertakes the analysis of the drama text–*Our Husband has Gone Mad Again* using the maxims discussed above in the dialogues and conversations to interrogate the writer's views on male and female speech. It is important to note that playwrights can indicate to an audience or readers these types of information about the relationships between characters. One of the challenges of dramatic criticism is identifying speech acts and the ways characters respond to them. Characters may produce speech acts, which are appropriate to their status within the play and in



consonance with the beliefs in the society where it is written/acted and read/watched. Characters can also be made by the author to say things about other characters, which are believed to be true in the real world.

### **Act 1 Scene 3 (p. 21)**

(Liza, Lejoka-Brown's third wife arrives from America earlier than expected; meets Mama Rashida, Lejoka's first wife and a conversation ensued)

- A1 Mama Rashida      (sepulchrally) we ... did not know that you would come so...so early.
- A2 Liza                    Oh...I'm sorry. Our plane arrived ahead of schedule. We were going to stop in Liberia and Ghana, but the weather was atrocious, so we flew direct to Lagos.
- A3 Mama Rashida      (not getting the meaning of atrocious) Hunh?
- A4 Liza                    I beg your pardon?
- A5 Mama Rashida      You say ... the weather?
- A6 Liza                    Oh atrocious—I mean ... bad not good ... you know? Not clear... black like smoke in kitchen (she laughs realising that Mama Rashida too is beginning to dare a smile).
- A7 Mama Rashida      Ahennnnn (she laughs now feeling more relaxed). (Sikira, Lejoka's second wife tears in from the kitchen).

The dialogue between Mama Rashida and Liza follows the normal or regular trend (conventional implicature). Mama Rashida's statement in A1 is both a comment and a request. While she is commenting on Liza's early arrival, she is also requesting for an explanation. Liza understood this and gave enough information; and more or less than required. They both adhered to the maxim of quantity. The implied author is probably conveying the information that it is not always that women talk excessively. Although the two women were meeting for the first time and they were both hesitant as indicated by the pauses in their speeches yet they were well behaved. This is also indicative of their adherence to the maxim of manner. Each of their responses was relevant to the discourse and the statements and language use were commensurate with their status. Mama Rashida is not well educated and Liza a medical doctor needed to explain a complex word. Liza understood all about the flight and she was not merely presumptuous. The two of them did not flout the maxim of quality, which requires speakers to be truthful. Mama Rashida showed Liza to

their husband's room where a pet (snake) is kept. Liza was scared and insists that the snake be removed before she settles there. Liza called Sikira whom she thought was a maid to help remove the snake. Another conversation has begun.

- B1 Liza (Calling) Sikira!
- B2 Sikira (Calling from off stage) What is it o?
- B3 Liza Come here, quick.
- B4 Sikira (Straight-faced) who called Sikira o?
- B4 Liza (Coaxing) Sikira, honey, I've been on the plane for over ten hours. Just sitting ... you know ... one gets tired. Naturally I need a rest.
- B5 Sikira (Nonchallantly...) So?
- B6 Liza Get the snake out of my room, will you please?
- B7 Sikira Me! Without the master telling me to? Kabo! (Liza decides that further dialogue with them would be fruitless. Mama Rashida then began to tell Sikira how she has tried to inform Liza about the snake and their husband's politics)
- B8 Mama Rashida (To Sikira) I was trying to tell sisi Liza how much the master loves the snake.
- B9 Sikira Ah that one na 'tory leke plasas!\*
- B10 Mama Rashida Also, how the master always takes freedom (the snake) with him whenever he goes to campaign for politics all around the ...
- B11 Sikira (with gossipy interest) Ah politics... that one na ogongo!\* (addressing Liz) Not only is the master in love ... madly in love with politics, he breathes politics, he washes his mouth every morning with politics, he sleeps with politics and dreams of... (becoming quite demonstrative) at night, deep in the middle of the night, the master grabs his pillow in his sleep ... holds it high above his head like a flag ... (Sikira holds spoon above her head) ... and sings: Freedom, freedom, everywhere there must be freedom, freedom for ...
- B12 Liza Is that so?



- B13 Sikira                      In bed...terrible...you wait; you will see him tonight (sings) freedom... You don't even have to keep awake to see. The master's voice will wake you up! (giggles naughtily.
- B14 Liza                        (coolly caustic) Someone ought to have told you, my dear girl, that it isn't proper for a house maid to go peeping into the bedroom of her master at night.

The dialogue between Liza and Sikira is completely different from the earlier one between Liza and Mama Rashida in terms of implicatures. In B1 Liza called Sikira and instead of saying 'yes' or 'I'm coming' she asked the question 'what is it o?' Liza then responded with a request that she should come. To Liza's request she responded with another question in B4 'who called Sikira o?' Although she knew it was Liza that called her. It is important to note that all the contributions made by Sikira between B2 and B7 are all questions. Liza's failed woefully in her effort to establish a rapport with Sikira in B4. By asking question instead of making direct statements, Sikira flouted the maxim of quantity and indirectly communicates her lack of desire of any intimacy. Sikira also flouted the maxim of manner especially by her use of an obscure word 'kabo'\* in B7 which Liza does not know its meaning. At the point Liza had stopped conversing with Sikira.

When Sikira began to 'blab' to Liza as stated by the author in B11 it was obvious that her contribution was no longer required. The first factor that indicated that Sikira had flouted the maxim of quantity in B11 is the addresses (Liza) did not require from her further information. Therefore she could be conveniently regarded as babbling. Also in terms of quantity she obviously said more than required in B11 such that when she eventually finished talking, Liza's attention had shifted from the content of her talk to her manners. This prompted Liza's response in B14. Even Mama Rashida exclaimed in B13 'Sikira' which indicated that she had talked too much. The maxim of quality was also flouted in the process because her reference to her husband washing his mouth with politics, dreaming of politics and breathing politics were mere exaggerations which she lacks evidence to support.

Contributions of characters if analysed with these maxims may expose quite a lot about writers' biases about the female speech. However Ola Rotimi cannot be said to be sexist or bias because the protagonist, a male, is also presented as breaking these maxims, which is a proof of the author's non-sexist attitude.

**Act 2 scene 3 (P. 56-57)**

The author in act 2 scene 3 reveals another very important aspect of women's talk and its stereotypical treatment within the domains of patriarchy. A dialogue between Lejoka-Brown and his wife Sikira

- C1 Lejoka-Brown (directs his full attention at Sikira in her new provocative dress).  
What is that partly hatched lizard dress for?
- C2 Sikira It is my dress for the election victory celebrations.
- C3 Lejoka-Brown I see, (Goes round her, pointing to the bare regions: the arms, shoulders, back, bosom) What about this... and there...all these... windows... doors...openings wider than two football fields put together! What photographer are you leaving them naked for?
- C4 Sikira (running to a chair, picking up her dark veil) Sisi Liza will sew a veil for me ... (drapes veil over head) ... to cover the parts of my body you don't want open.
- C5 Lejoka-Brown (with cynical calm contemplates the dress further then) Go take the rag off.
- C6 Sikira Don't you like it?
- C7 Lejoka-Brown Are you there. Hurry along now and put on the type of dress human beings wear.
- C8 Sikira But this is the type of dress they wear in America and England and in...
- C9 Lejoka-Brown The devil take you and your America.
- C10 Sikira B-u-t I li-k-e it.
- C11 Lekoja-Brown W-e-l-l I d-o-n-t li-k-e it! Now woman, you do just as I say quick or I will tear off that half peeled banana from the rest of your body.
- C12 Sikira Do as you say, do as you say, it is always command, command...
- C13 Lekoja-Brown For the last time, sister let your feet take you into your room before thunder rumbles down your throat!



- C14 Sikira (tearfully) What am I in this house anyway?  
 C15 Lejoka-Brown Go on!  
 C16 Sikira Am I a slave?  
 C17 Lejoka-Brown You heard me!  
 C18 Sikira Or a housewife?  
 C19 Lekoja-Brown ...now get out of here.

The author in the above dialogue reveals vividly the unequal distribution of power between husband (man) and wife (woman) in the typical African society.

First it was Lejoka-Brown who initiated the conversation and from C1 to 14 it was like a master-slave relationship. As he questioned she responded promptly. They both adhered to all the maxims until when in C5 Lejoka issued a command and Sikira responded with a question. Sikira's question was intended to generate another dialogue, which could lead to a consensus, as there is already a conflict between them. Lejoka-Brown did not answer all the four questions Sikira asked from C6 to C18. Lekoja-Brown's deliberate failure to answer Sikira's questions is indicative of the contempt with which, especially men treat women's talk. His refusal to answer these questions culminated into the treats in C11 and C13 respectively. Consequently, Lejoka-Brown broke two of the maxims; the maxim of quantity because he did not give the required information and the maxim of manner because he was not well behaved.

Another important aspect of the 'real' world reflected in this dialogue is the aspect of 'butting-in' by men when women are speaking. Men are said to often encroach upon women space than vice-versa. In C8 Sikira was not allowed to complete her 'turn' before Lejoka-Brown interrupted her. This is a display of superiority by the man while communicating indirectly that the woman has nothing remarkable to say.

## Conclusion

On the whole, the author presents a pragmatic view of the human nature on speech, irrespective of sex. The play reveals that both men and women have the capacity to exhibit all the qualities with which women are often stigmatized. The book, in addition to being a unique satire proffers corrective measures on female stigmatization and call to equity. Writers, Playwrights and Teachers of Literature should be conscious of the negative impacts of sexist literature and strive to purge the Africa society of such destructive ideology. Literature, when thought in such ways that enable students to question inequality, can enhance creativity and the passing on of quality education to younger generations.

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